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# Cheers for 'Do the Brew'

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HASTINGS — When it came to “wettin’ your whistle,” Hastings was the place Saturday as more than 400 people attended the inaugural “Do the Brew” fundraiser for the Hastings Community Arts Council.

According to event organizer Randy Chick, director of the Hastings Downtown Business Improvement District, “Do the Brew” featured 20 craft brewers from around the nation, including nine from Nebraska.

“Do the Brew” breweries participating in the event were: Thunderhead, Gottberg, Schilling Bridge, Empyrean Ales, Nebraska Brewing Co., Luckey Bucket, Spilker Ales, Modern Monks, Tallgrass, Boulevard, Boston Beer, Odell, Abita, New Belgium, Blue Moon, Leinenkugel, Fort Collins, Shipyard, Widmer Brothers and Michelob Craft.

There were also a variety of national and international wines provided by WineStyles of Hastings and vodka samples by Coopers Chase Distillery LLC of West Point.

According to Chick, people attending the event had the opportunity to sample 63 varieties of beer. And these aren’t the mass appeal beers that are all over the television, but fine beers of unique favor and variety brewed at microbreweries, some locally owned, such as Thunderhead Brewery of Kearney.

Head brewmaster Trevor Schaben started Thunderhead Brewery in 1999 and now his beers are sold throughout Nebraska at 60 different locations. His house speciality is his honey wheat beer.

Schaben said he was happy to have his business represented at “Do the Brew.”

He said he got into the business because he always wanted to be a brewmaster and he knew he had to start his own business to accomplish that dream. Now, 12 years later, he is a master at his craft and his reputation for his brew is growing.

And the growth of craft breweries, Schaben said, has a lot to do with fine beer connoisseurs looking for diversity and good taste in their beer.

“People like variety,” Schaben said. “They want something different.”

And something different was what Seth and Kim Kohman of Shelton looked for Saturday at “Do the Brew” and they were not disappointed.



Heather Sanderson, left, and Lisa McNeal, both of Hastings, sample shots of Cooper's Chase Vodka Saturday at Do the Brew in Hastings. Cooper's Chase Vodka, distilled in West Point, was just one of the drinks available at Do the Brew. (Laura Beahm/For The Independent)

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Kim was interested in the wine and Seth in the beer, both enjoyed many of the fine samplings that were offered at the event.

“It’s still a learning process,” Kim said. “But it is always better when you have such variety.”

Seth said that he and his wife also like to support local businesses and Nebraska not only has a growing wine industry, but many communities, such as Kearney and Grand Island, also have microbreweries that offer a local favor to a community’s beer list. It is a lost tradition for many rural communities, as years ago, especially before Prohibition, many towns, such as Grand Island, had their own beer brewery.

Chick said a number of people had been inquiring about having a craft beer festival in Hastings. He said the Hastings Downtown Business Improvement District decided to sponsor the craft beer festival and make it into a fundraiser for the fledging Hastings Community Arts Council, which started last year to promote the arts in Hastings.

Chick said there’s a synergy between the Hastings downtown community and the fine arts as many of the community’s music and arts events help draw people to the community and to Hastings’ unique downtown area, such as Saturday’s “Do the Brew.”

Not knowing what to expect with an inaugural event like “Do the Brew” Chick said they were pleasantly surprised with nearly 300 people purchasing tickets for the event prior to Saturday and Chick was expecting a big crowd of people off the streets for the event.

And what a bargain, as a general admission ticket included admission to the event and 16 two-ounce craft beer tastes or eight one-ounce wine tastings. For a \$25 VIP ticket, the event goer not only received a commemorative “Do the Brew” tasting glass, but one food ticket and unlimited craft beer tastes. There were a number of food vendors on hand to balance the good drinking opportunities.

And Kaleena Fong, chairman of the Hastings Community Arts Council, was pleased with the turnout. She said it was the first major fundraiser for the council since it was started last year and they hope to get enough money to help establish the council’s non-profit status.

One of the projects the Hastings Community Arts Council is involved with is the Downtown Concert Series, which was started in 2009 by Chick and the Downtown Business Improvement District.

Many of the volunteers on hand Saturday to make the “Do the Brew” event a success were members of the Hastings Community Arts Council.

“Hastings is a great community when it comes to supporting the arts,” Fong said. “We are very pleased to see such a great turnout.”